OXFORD CONFERENCE STUDY SERIES

based on

The Message and Reports of the Oxford Conference on Church, Community and State

THE CHURCH AND THE ECONOMIC ORDER

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PREFACE TO THE SERIES

For more than a quarter of a century the Christian churches have been drawing together. The impulse given by the great Missionary Conference of Edinburgh, 1910, has borne fruit in two parallel movements: one concerned with the life and work of the Church, the other with its faith and order. These movements culminated in two great conferences, held in Great Britain in the summer of 1937. The first, which was held in Oxford in July, took place under the auspices of the Universal Christian Council for Life and Work and had for its subject CHURCH, COMMUNITY, AND STATE. It was the successor of the Stockholm Conference of 1925, which inaugurated what has come to be known as the Life and Work Movement. The second was held in Edinburgh in August of the same year under the auspices of the Continuation Committee of Faith and Order, a body which owed its initiation to the Lausanne Conference of 1927. Both Conferences united in recommending to the churches the creation of a World Council of Churches which should carry on the work now being done by the two movements separately.

The Oxford Conference was concerned primarily with the relation of the churches to the world outside, the Edinburgh Conference with their relation to one another. Each considered a number of important questions and made weighty recommendations which concern the churches as a whole. In order to facilitate the study of these recommendations by churches and educational institutions two sets of studies are being prepared: one dealing with Oxford, the other with Edinburgh. The present series, six in number, will be based upon the findings of Oxford. The users of each pamphlet (study) are urged to read the entire text of the report contained in it before commencing the study outlines.

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SALIENT FEATURES OF THE OXFORD CONFERENCE

A most impressive feature of the Conference was the way in which, from the start, it sensed and grappled with the problem of religious freedom in the face of the growing totalitarian state. This was dramatized at the first session when it was announced that for reasons growing out of the internal situation in Germany no representatives of the Evangelical Church of that country would be present. The Conference was deeply moved by this fact and in sending its greetings to the German Christians who were to have shared in its fellowship it crystallized a sentiment that was to be dominant throughout the sessions. The Conference felt that it was meeting under the shadow of a pagan secularism expressing itself in the forms of exaggerated nationalism, imperialism, fascism, and atheistic communism. There was special concern over the way in which the place of religion is usurped by nationalism and racialism and the extent to which the youth to whom the churches would offer Christian culture are being regimented in anti-Christian states.

A major emphasis in the deliberations of the Conference, which appears in the reports, was the disintegration of modern society, the collapse of standards, the disappearance of time-honored sanctions, and the waning of spiritual authority on the part of the Church itself. This mood of crisis and a corresponding urgency toward redemptive action was felt at Oxford from beginning to end.

Not only did the Conference characterize the present era as one of disintegration but it diagnosed contemporary evils as due to the secularization of the spirit and outlook of humanity. Again and again it was proclaimed that humanism, the elevation of man's power and authority to the level of the divine, was responsible for the present condition of society. Thus the ascription to the state of supreme power and the construction of utopias as means whereby man engineers his own salvation—or, to use the phrase of our continental fellow-Christians—the emergence of the "demonic" —were deplored as responsible for the collapse of human values. (What they mean is man's tendency to assign infinite values to certain finite movements.)

Over against this judgment upon human perversity and depravity was the constant emphasis on the sovereignty of God. The divine will was exalted in contrast to the human; the holiness of God was set over against the sinfulness of man. Again and again it was said that our salvation was due to the divine benevolence, not to any intrinsic worth of man.

This judgment upon man's unworthiness led to a mood of repentance and confession which was continued throughout the Conference. It furnished

a major theme for the services of worship which were held morning and evening in old St. Mary's Church, where the undivided Western Church had worshipped for five hundred years before the Reformation. Confession was made not only for individual delinquency but for corporate sin, for the failure of the Church to be true to its own witness and to stand against the materialistic drift of contemporary life.

It was in these services of worship that the real experience of unity was found by the Oxford Conference. The delegates went to their plenary sessions in the old Town Hall and to their several sectional meeting places to grapple with problems of theology and social ethics and to face what seemed the almost impossible task of reconciling conflicting views which rested upon widely different, often upon contrary, philosophic assumptions. But out of the confusion, and perhaps at times impatience, engendered in these discussions they returned to St. Mary's for worship to find that Anglicans, Lutherans, Eastern Orthodox, Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians, Quakers, and all the rest, could worship together and participate in common aspirations, a common repentance, a common intercession and a common dedication. It was at St. Mary's, the delegates agreed, that the *Una Sancta*—the universal Christian fellowship—was realized in fact.

This experience culminated in an inter-communion service celebrated by the Archbishop of Canterbury with which the Conference was brought to a close. It was the first time that an Anglican prelate had administered communion at a great public service of worship to Free Churchmen together with members of his own faith.

The central place of the Church itself in the deliberation of the Conference was unmistakably clear. It was said by a careful observer who was a member of both conferences that there was more discussion of the Church at Oxford than at Edinburgh. This was because the Church was the starting point for Oxford in every one of its studies: the Church and the Community, the Church and the State, and so on, through all the problem areas explored.

It should be noted that the Youth Commission, while it issued no report for publication—indeed, was not asked to do so—made a report to the Conference upon its deliberations which not only revealed the same concern as did the other reports but—and this was most surprising—showed an even greater conservatism. (This illustrated the relatively great interest in Europe in purely theological questions.)

The most concrete outcome of the Conference was the adoption of a proposal for the merger of the Life and Work and the Faith and Order movements in a World Council of Churches, a plan which was transmitted to the Edinburgh Conference and there adopted for submission directly to the churches.

One of the ways in which ideas are spread is through new terms. If we in America are to appreciate the central drive of the Oxford Conference, we must learn the meaning of a word hitherto little used among us—namely, the word "ecumenical." It means world-wide, and as applied in the deliberations at Oxford and also at Edinburgh it signifies "concerning the whole household of the faithful," meaning the entire Christian Church in conscious fellowship. It is a more inclusive term than "Protestant" which because of its negative character and its limited reference is not in favor among those who are working for world-wide Christian unity. The Eastern Orthodox churches, which form so large a part of the movement are, of course, not Protestant. Also, in the Anglican churches, and in a considerable section of the Episcopal Church in America, the word "Protestant" is not in common use. Moreover, while the Church of Rome declined to send official delegates and sent only "observers," the world conference leaders were very desirous that it should not appear that the conferences were anti-Roman. In spirit Oxford and Edinburgh envisaged an ecumenical fellowship from which no Christian body should be excluded.

INTRODUCTION TO

THE CHURCH AND THE ECONOMIC ORDER

This pamphlet contains the report of the Section of the Oxford Conference which dealt with "Church, State, and Community in relation to the Economic Order." It is the result of extensive preparatory work for the Conference and it is quite genuinely a product of the work of the Section. When the Section first met it had before it a printed preliminary report which was the sixth draft based upon rigorous criticisms of each preceding draft. This preliminary report which had been prepared by the Chairman and Secretary was used as the point of departure for discussion, on the basis of which the present document was written. The Section had approximately seventy members. It spent about eighteen hours in discussion. The actual writing was done by a drafting committee and at several stages was revised in the light of the criticisms of the Section.

It may give some idea of the personnel of the Section if the names of the members of the drafting committee are mentioned. In addition to the Chairman and Secretary there were the following: Professor John Baillie, Mr. Charles P. Taft II, Professor Reinhold Niebuhr, Mr. T. S. Eliot, Professor R. H. Tawney, Dr. Justin Wroe Nixon, Rev. V. A. Demant, Professor Paul Tillich, The Archdeacon of Northumberland, Rev. Even Marstrand (Denmark).

Something should be said here about the way in which the report was accepted by the Section and by the Plenary Session of the Conference. On the basis of the discussion by the Section, in which almost every member at some time participated, the drafting committee prepared a skeleton report during the week-end in the middle of the Conference period. That report was presented to the Section and was accepted with only one dissenting voice. That this acceptance was not merely passive acquiescence in a *fait accompli* may be seen from the fact that about thirty members made brief addresses on the report. This draft report was revised in the light of these addresses and was then presented by the Chairman of the Section to the plenary session of the Conference. This Section was the first to report to the whole Conference and it was therefore possible to present only a skeleton document, which, it was understood, would be completed during the week and acted on by the Section. The whole Conference discussed this report for about four and a half hours. At the end of this discussion a vote was taken and the report was accepted by the Conference with only two dissenting votes.

The drafting committee continued work on the full report and was able to present it to the Section as a whole at a meeting held later in the week. This full report proved to be so completely in harmony with the mind of the Section that after much discussion, none of it hostile, the report was accepted unanimously by the Section. It is only fair to say that one member who had voted against the skeleton report was not present.

The report which is published in this pamphlet is the one unanimously approved by the Section at its final meeting, with a few minor changes made on the basis of the discussion at that meeting. These facts are presented here in order to show the degree to which this report is the work of a representative group and not that of a small committee.

It is not to be expected that any one group of Christians would find an ecumenical report written throughout in their own vocabulary. There may be, for example, some expressions in the first section of the report which will seem strange to most Americans who read it. Also, it must be recognized that an international report can not be expected to deal concretely with all urgent problems concerning which the Christians of any one country are seeking light. For example, it could hardly be expected that such a group as that which met at Oxford could pronounce on the problems presented by the recent strikes in the United States. What might have been said concretely about labor organizations would not have applied at the same time to the United States, Great Britain, Denmark and France, not to speak of the totalitarian countries which were represented at the Conference. A report of this kind must serve a different purpose from pronouncements of national church bodies made in the face of national problems. It belongs, rather, to the level of fundamental assumptions and convictions. It belongs to the process of the development of a Christian social doctrine on the basis of which judgment on particular issues must be based.

It would help the reader to keep in mind the following ruling principles which guided the Section in preparing the report and which pervade the logic of the argument:

1. The first principle elaborated is *the relevance of Christian faith to the problems of economic life.* This is set forth in both theological and ethical terms. The root of the ethic is found in the Christian revelation of God. There are some Christians who so far as the psychological process is concerned come to their recognition of the economic imperatives of Christian faith by starting with the ethic and there are others who do so by starting with their belief about God. But whatever the psychological process may be, all can recognize that there is in Christian faith in God a deeper ground for the economic imperatives of the Christian religion than is possible on the basis of the ethic alone, a surer ground and also a greater dynamic. As the report says, the ethical obligation toward one's neighbor "is a duty toward God and continues to be operative even when the neighbor does not obviously demand or deserve respect." Without such a theological basis what we speak of as "respect for personality" is always in a precarious position.

2. The second principle is what may be called *the independence of Christian faith of every specific program for economic change.* The conflict between the results of the present economic order and Christianity is made very clear in the third section of this report. Many who read that section

may be surprised not to find endorsed their own particular ideas for changing an economic order which is so obviously unchristian in its results. It is at this point that what is here called the principle of "the independence of Christian faith" applies in at least two ways.

a. The Christian must recognize the limitations of every proposed program for economic change. He cannot *identify* Christianity with Socialism, Communism, the New Deal or any other movement or program good or bad. To do so would be to ignore the fact that if any such program were realized with measurable success, Christianity would still be the basis for criticizing the new social order as it is the basis for criticizing the old. To identify Christianity wth any one of these programs would be to level down the meaning of Christianity to a secular philosophy and it would lead to ethical stagnation even though perhaps in some cases at a higher level than the *status quo.* This does not mean, as the fifth section of the report makes clear, that a Christian should regard the choice between programs and movements as an indifferent one but that in his support of any program or movement he should keep his Christian judgment free from partisanship.

b. The other way in which this principle is applied is in the recognition that in the choice of any program for economic change ethical and technical issues are interwined and that in regard to the technical issues the Christian as a Christian and the Church as a Church cannot speak with authority. It was admitted by all who endorsed this report—and they were a group which represented widely differing economic functions and political convictions—that the consequences for human life of contemporary capitalism are evil to a staggering degree. But while Christians may agree, and if this report is correct, should agree on that, it must be expected that they will differ on the following questions, at least:

Can the present system be so changed that it will no longer cause evils which are greater than those which would probably be by-products of another system?

If the present system were so changed, would it be the present system any longer? Is not this talk of "systems" artificial?

If it cannot be so changed without really becoming a system which would more accurately be called "socialism," for example, should that change be one of gradual reform and replacement or should it come about by the kind of left-wing political action advocated by the Socialist and Communist parties?

Even if we were to give an affirmative answer to the last question we would still have to choose between different political strategies. The fourth section of the report elaborates the issues which arise from the plain fact that Christians do differ on these technical problems.

3. The third principle is that *the Church should function in economic life not primarily through the action of official agencies of the Church, and not primarily through the clergy but through its lay members who are*

engaged in industry and commerce and who as citizens must make political decisions which affect the economic order. This principle does not mean that what its members now do necessarily represents the Church in action. They more often than not merely reflect in their economic decisions the interests and prejudices of the economic groups to which they belong. The Church as a worshipping community which includes all classes (though not in the proportion which makes it fully representative of all classes) and as the source of Christian teaching and inspiration has a great task to which its leaders have hardly begun to apply themselves in bringing the economic and political choices of its members under the judgment of their faith as Christians.

4. *If the Church is to fulfil this task it must develop a wide range of teaching which runs beyond mere general principles and a general call to a new life in Christ but which stops short of prescribing particular solutions of economic problems.* Section five in this report is an attempt to outline that teaching. Obviously that outline must be filled in with concrete material growing out of the situation in America. Readers who are impatient because the report does not endorse their own solutions and programs should ask themselves this question: If the teaching outlined in the fifth section of this report became a part of the regular teaching of the Church, if it controlled preaching and the religious education of children, if those who take the initiative in the local church and in the larger units of the Church committed themselves to making that teaching a part of the very atmosphere of the worship and life of the Church, would the Church not make a decisive contribution in raising the level of the economic decisions of its members and in preparing the way for peaceful economic change?

5. *The Church must put its own house in order.* The latter part of the fifth section of the report is a clear confession that the economic life of the Church is itself at a sub-Christian level and that the Church must cleanse itself as well as seek to spread economic justice throughout the world. There runs through this report the same spirit of self-criticism concerning the Church's own life that is to be found in all the reports of the Oxford Conference.

It has not been possible to organize the four studies strictly about separate divisions of the report. The portions most relevant to each study are indicated, but it is important that in approaching all of them the entire report be kept in mind. It has a unity that will appear increasingly with rereading.

III. THE CHURCH AND THE ECONOMIC ORDER

(This report was the first to be presented to the full Conference, and was submitted in shorter form. The Conference received the report, referred it back to the section for revision in the light of the discussion, and commended it to the serious and favourable consideration of the churches. The report was revised and expanded by the section and approved in its present form by all the members present at the final meeting of the section.)

PART I. THE BASIS OF THE CHRISTIAN CONCERN FOR THE ECONOMIC ORDER

The Christian Church approaches the problems of the social and economic order from the standpoint of her faith in the revelation of God in Christ. In the Life and Death of Our Lord, God is revealed as a just God who condemns sin and as a merciful God who redeems sinners. The nature and will of God as thus revealed is the basis of human existence and the standard of human conduct. The chief end of man is to glorify God, to honour and love Him, in work and life, as in worship. This love involves the obligation to love our neighbours as ourselves, a second commandment which Jesus declared to be like unto the first.

This love of neighbour is an obligation which partly rests upon the native worth and dignity of man as made in the image of God. In all systems of morality this obligation is to a greater or less degree recognized. Christianity, however, recognizes that the image of God in man is so defaced by sin that man's native worth and dignity is largely obscured. For this reason it must be emphasized that our obligation to the neighbour springs not so much from our recognition of man's native dignity as from the Christian revelation of God's purpose to restore that dignity through the redemption that is in Christ. The obligation is therefore a duty towards God and continues to be operative even when the neighbour does not obviously demand or deserve respect. We must love our fellow-men because God loves them and wills to redeem them.

The Kingdom of God, as proclaimed in the Gospel, is the reign of God which both has come and is coming. It is an established reality in the coming of Christ and in the presence of His Spirit in the world. It is however still in conflict with a sinful world, which crucified its Lord, and its ultimate triumph is still to come. In so far as it has come, the will of God as revealed in Christ (that is, the commandment of love) is the ultimate standard of Christian conduct. Standards drawn from the observation of human behaviour or prompted by immediate necessities are not only less complete than the commandment of love but frequently contain elements that contradict it. In so far as the Kingdom of God is in conflict with the world, and is therefore still to come, the Christian finds himself under the necessity of discovering the best available means of checking human sinfulness and of increasing the possibilities and opportunities of love within a sinful world.

The relative and departmental standard for all the social arrangements and institutions, all the economic structures and political systems, by which the life of man is ordered, is the principle of justice. Justice, as the ideal of a harmonious relation of life to life, obviously presupposes the sinful tendency of one life to take advantage of another. This sinful tendency it seeks to check, by defining the rightful place and privilege which each life must have in the harmony of the whole and by assigning the duty of each to each. Justice does not demand that the self *sacrifice* itself completely for the neighbour's good, but seeks to define and to maintain the good which each member of the community may rightfully claim in the harmony of the whole.

The principle of justice has both a positive and negative significance.

Negatively, principles of justice restrain evil and the evildoer. They must therefore become embodied in systems of coercion which prevent men from doing what sinful ambition, pride, lust, and greed might prompt them to do. This necessary coercion is itself a root of new evils, since the exercise of coercion involves power, and power tempts the possessor to its unrighteous use. Furthermore coercion may arouse resentment among those coerced, even when its purpose is a necessary social end. The use of power and coercion cannot therefore be regarded by Christians as ultimately desirable. Criticism against its abuses must be constantly maintained. On the other hand, it cannot be assumed that the practice of Christian love will ever obviate the necessity for coercive political and economic arrangements.

The laws of justice are not purely negative. They are not merely "dykes against sin." The political and economic structure of society is also the mechanical skeleton which carries the organic element in society. Forms of production and methods of co-operation may serve the cause of human brotherhood by serving and extending the principle of love beyond the sphere of purely personal relations.

The commandment of love therefore always presents possibilities for individuals beyond the requirements of economic and social institutions. There is no legal, political, or economic system so bad or so good as to absolve individuals from the responsibility to transcend its requirements by acts of Christian charity. Institutional requirements necessarily prescribe only the minimum. Even in the best possible social system they can only achieve general standards in which the selfishness of the human heart is taken for granted and presupposed. But the man who is in Christ knows a higher obligation, which transcends the requirements of justice—the obligation of a love which is the fulfilment of the law.

The love which is the fulfilment of the law is, however, no substitute for law, for institutions, or for systems. Individual acts of charity within a given system of government or economics may mitigate its injustices and increase its justice. But they do not absolve the Christian from seeking the best possible institutional arrangement and social structure for the ordering of human life. Undue emphasis upon the higher possibilities of love in personal relations, within the limits of a given system of justice or an

established social structure, may tempt Christians to allow individual acts of charity to become a screen for injustice and a substitute for justice. Christianity becomes socially futile if it does not recognize that love must will justice and that the Christian is under an obligation to secure the best possible social and economic structure, in so far as such structure is determined by human decisions.

The relation of the commandment of love to the justice of political and economic systems is twofold. It is an ideal which reaches beyond any possible achievements in the field of political relations, but it is nevertheless also a standard by which various schemes of justice may be judged. In attempting to deal with political and economic problems, the Christian must therefore be specially on his guard against two errors.

The one is to regard the realities of social justice incorporated in given systems and orders as so inferior to the law of love that the latter cannot be a principle of discrimination between them but only a principle of indiscriminate judgment upon them all. This error makes Christianity futile as a guide in all those decisions which Christians, like other people, must constantly be making in the political and economic sphere. Practically, it gives the advantage to established systems as against the challenge of new social adventures and experiments; for it tempts Christians to make no decisions at all, and such efforts to reserve decision become in practice decisions in favour of the *status quo*.

The other error is to identify some particular social system with the will of God or to equate it with the Kingdom of God. When conservatives insist on such identification in favour of the *status quo* they impart a dangerous religious sanction to it which must drive those who challenge the *status quo* into a secular revolt against religion itself. If, on the other hand, this identification is made in the interests of a new social order, it will lead to the same complacency which the critic deprecates in the old social situation. Every tendency to identify the Kingdom of God with a particular structure of society or economic mechanism must result in moral confusion for those who maintain the system and in disillusionment for those who suffer from its limitations. The former will regard conformity with its standards as identical with the fulfilment of the law, thus falling into the sin of pharisaism. The latter will be tempted to a cynical disavowal of the religion, because it falsely gives absolute worth to partial values and achievements. Both errors are essentially heretical from the point of view of Christian faith. The one denies the reality of the Kingdom of God in history; the other equates the Kingdom of God with the processes of history. In the one case, the ultimate and eternal destiny of human existence, which transcends history, is made to support an attitude of indifference towards historical social issues; in the other case, the eternal destiny of human existence is denied or obscured. The law of love which is the standard of the Christian life is properly regarded as at the same time both a present reality and an ultimate possibility. It is not only a criterion of judgment in all the fateful decisions which men must make in history, but also an indictment against all historical achievements.

As a criterion of judgment upon the relative merits of economic arrangements and social structures, the law of love gives positive guidance, in terms of justice, even though it transcends the realities of all possible social structures. The obligation to love our neighbours as ourselves places clearly under condemnation all social and economic systems which give one man undue advantage over others. It must create an uneasy conscience (for example) in all Christians who are involved in a social system which denies children, of whatever race or class, the fullest opportunity to develop whatever gifts God has given them and makes their education depend upon the fortuitous circumstance of a father's possession or lack of means to provide the necessary funds. It must challenge any social system which provides social privileges without reference to the social functions performed by individuals, or which creates luxury and pride on the one hand, and want and insecurity on the other. It makes the conscience of Christians particularly uneasy in regard to the deprivation of basic security for large masses of human beings.

PART II. ANALYSIS OF THE PRESENT ECONOMIC SITUATION

There is to-day no *one* economic order which ecumenical Christianity faces. The Government of the U.S.S.R., for example, exercises jurisdiction over one-sixth of all the land surface of the globe, on which there lives one-twelfth of the world's population, including (it has been estimated) one-fifth of the population of the industrialized world. The economic and social structure of this huge territory is fundamentally different from that prevailing elsewhere. Again, National Socialist Germany and Fascist Italy have evolved economic systems each of which differs in important respects from those of other so-called capitalist countries. And between the types of capitalism which are evolving in democratic states—the Scandinavian countries, France, the United States, Great Britain, etc.—there are also differences of a highly important kind. The amount, for instance, of social and industrial legislation which has been passed in Great Britain, and the extent to which Trade Unions have for many years been recognized there, make the economic system of that country very different from that found in the United States. For the present purpose it seems wise to concentrate attention on what can broadly be described as the capitalist economic system, though it must always be borne in mind, not only that this phrase is liable to be dangerously misleading, but also that a large part of the world lies outside its ambit.

The present economic situation in the countries under consideration is a product of the emancipation of the individual from the social and cultural restrictions of the Middle Ages. In so far as the spirit and the institutions of the feudal order and of the guild system had restrained, in spite of their religious and cultural creativity, the free development of human potentialities, the dawning of the capitalist age must be considered a definite step forward in the progress of humanity. This is true of the intellectual as well as of the political and economic achievements of that

age. The system of free enterprise is responsible for that industrial development which, for the first time in human history, has made it possible to overcome the natural scarcity of economic resources by successive technological improvements. Despite the vast increase of the world's population it has raised to a considerable degree the general standard of consumption. By the mechanization of industry it has reduced the physical labour of the manual workers. For the first time in history it has brought all parts of the world into interdependence with each other and has made the idea of the unity of mankind a fact of common experience.

It was thought at one time that the development of this new economic order would not only improve the material conditions of life but would also establish social justice. This expectation was rooted in the belief that a preestablished harmony would so govern the self-interest of individuals as to create the greatest possible harmony in society as a whole. "Each man, seeking his own, would serve the commonweal." To-day this belief is largely discredited. The attempt of human reason to create an autonomous and universal culture has resulted in a variety of independent and specialized cultural activities, which are not related to any one organizing principle, and which consequently lack that unity that we believe can be realized only through the penetration of the whole by the spirit of religion. The absence of this spiritual centre from the economic order has involved the progressive dissipation of the spiritual inheritance of Western life. The same forces which had produced material progress have often enhanced inequalities, created permanent insecurity, and subjected all members of modern society to the domination of so-called independent economic "laws." The competitive superiority of large-scale production has gone far to destroy the old traditional society of craftsmen and farmers, and thereby has created a society which is characterized in many countries by the concentration of wealth, on the one hand, and the existence of large urban masses on the other. The progressive mechanization of industry has periodically thrown large numbers of workers into long periods of unemployment. The cycle of industrial fluctuations has caused a tremendous waste of productive power and, in consequence, "poverty in the midst of plenty."

At the same time the human side of economic life has been profoundly affected. Broadly speaking, capitalistic production has not escaped the danger of treating human labour as a commodity, to be bought at the lowest possible price and to be utilized to the greatest possible extent. The predominance of the profit motive has tended to deprive the worker of the social meaning of his work and has encouraged hostility between the members of different groups in their economic relationships.

In the course of the nineteenth century the worst evils which accompanied the rise of capitalism were mitigated in the more advanced industrial nations. There was a rapid growth in the population of the industrialized part of the world, and the constant expansion of markets in industrially undeveloped countries reduced the social and economic pressure in the indus-

trialized countries. These trade outlets made it possible to satisfy many of the demands of the poorer sections of the community, by the increase of real wages and by social legislation in various fields. Under social and political pressure the various governments of the Western world enacted laws providing for graduated taxation and for old-age pensions, sickness and accident insurance, etc. The success of the trade unions and the co-operative movement helped also in this process of the mitigation of social evils.

But industrial expansion and technical progress have tended to defeat their own ends. In place of free trade and free competition, which were characteristic principles of the earlier expansionist period of capitalism, protectionist measures were adopted by the State and monopolies were established in many fields of economic enterprise. One of the causes of this change lay in the fact that former "backward" and colonial nations had been industrial competitors. The consequent contraction of markets accentuated the competition of nations for the remaining markets of the world. Through this development, the earlier stage of competitive capitalism has been gradually replaced by a monopolistic stage, and this economic change has brought with it corresponding political consequences. On the one hand, the economic process has been increasingly subjected to State control and interference; and, on the other hand, leading industrial and financial groups have been tempted to obtain the support of the State for their particular interests, and the original ideal of modern democracy has thus in practice become increasingly difficult to achieve.

The World War and its economic consequences have accelerated and accentuated these tendencies, not only within the economy of particular nations but also in the relationship of state to state. As the former outlets for economic expansion have become progressively more narrow, the fundamental tensions of the capitalistic economic order are becoming increasingly manifest to our generation. The older tendency towards free competition remains a factor in all Western nations, and contends against the new tendency towards monopoly and State control. Out of this conflict social and economic systems have emerged in the different nations which contain elements of both tendencies in varying proportions.

While the agrarian population participated in the benefits of capitalistic expansion in the latter period of the nineteenth century, the recent mechanization of agricultural production has also drawn predominantly agrarian areas in many parts of the world into a rapid process of transformation.

This brief survey would be incomplete without calling attention to the effect of capitalistic development upon countries, such as China and India, which had not been active participants in the process. Their observation of the process in other nations, and their reaction to economic exploitation by capitalistic powers, have prompted a widespread demand for radical social change through which the benefits of industrialization might be secured and the evils from which the industrialized nations of the West are suffering might be avoided.

A consequence of this development of capitalism was the rise of socialism and communism. These movements represent a protest against the evil results of the capitalist economic order from those who suffered chiefly from it. In several countries this protest allied itself with a radical denial of Christianity, the Church, and belief in God. This is *partly* due to the fact that the Churches had become deeply involved in the social and cultural attitudes of the wealthier members of society, upon whom they were frequently dependent, politically and economically. As the Churches did not detach themselves from these alliances a disastrous chasm opened between those (on the one hand) who were struggling for social justice but on non-religious or anti-religious grounds, and those (on the other hand) who stood for the Christian faith but did not seem to recognize existing injustices. This is one of the reasons why victorious communism persecutes the Christian Churches, denounces religion as a tool of reaction, and seeks to eradicate it; and why in other countries the ruthless persecution of communists and socialists is either tolerated without protest or supported by Christians and Churches.

Facing this situation the Christian Churches must first of all acknowledge and repent for their blindness to the actual situation; for this blindness is partly responsible for such hostility as exists between themselves and the radical movements which aim at social justice. The Churches must not regard an attack directed against themselves as an attack directed against God. They must acknowledge that God has spoken to their conscience through these movements, by revealing through them the real situation of millions of their members. On the other hand, the Churches must continue resolutely to reject those elements in the actual development of communism which conflict with the Christian truth: the *Utopianism* which looks for the fulfilment of human existence through the natural process of history, and which presupposes that the improvement of social institutions will automatically produce an improvement in human personalities; the *materialism* which derives all moral and spiritual values from economic needs and economic conditions, and deprives the personal and cultural life of its creative freedom; and, finally, that *disregard for the dignity of the individual* in which communism may differ theoretically, but in which it does not differ practically, from other contemporary totalitarian movements.

PART III. POINTS AT WHICH THE CHRISTIAN UNDERSTANDING OF LIFE IS CHALLENGED

At the beginning of this part of the report attention should be called to the potentialities for good in the economic order. Situations vary in different parts of the world, but in many countries it already seems possible, through the full utilization of the resources of the new technology and through the release of human productive power, to remove the kind of poverty which is crippling to human personality. There is a sense in which poverty is a relative matter, and hence in any situation would be

present in some form; but we are thinking of the poverty which would be regarded in any age as denying the physical necessities of life. The abolition of such poverty now seems to depend on the human organization of economic life, rather than on factors given in nature or on what might be called the inevitable constitution of every economic order. But the possibility of economic "plenty" has this moral importance, that to an increasing extent it makes the persistence of poverty a matter for which men are morally responsible. This possibility marks off our time from the period of the New Testament and from other periods in which Christian thinking about economic life has been formulated. In the light of it the direction of Christian effort in relation to the economic order should henceforth be turned from charitable paternalism to the realization of more equal justice in the distribution of wealth. Moreover, Christians who live in the more privileged geographical areas must recognize that the securing of economic plenty and greater justice in its distribution within their respective national groups is not the whole of their duty in this connection; they cannot escape some measure of responsibility for those areas where for years to come there will doubtless be desperate economic need.

It seems to us that the moral and spiritual nature of man, according to the Christian understanding of that nature, is affronted by the assumptions and operation of the economic order of the industrialized world, in four respects to which we wish to draw special attention.

1. The Enhancement of Acquisitiveness

This economic order results, in the first place, in a serious danger that the finer qualities of the human spirit will be sacrificed to an overmastering preoccupation with a department of life which, though important on its own plane, ought to be strictly subordinated to other more serious aspects of life. We are warned in the New Testament that riches are a danger to their possessors, and experience would appear to confirm that diagnosis. It is not possible to serve both God and Mammon. When the necessary work of society is so organized as to make the acquisition of wealth the chief criterion of success it encourages a feverish scramble for money, and a false respect for the victors in the struggle, which is as fatal in its moral consequences as any other form of idolatry. In so far as the pursuit of monetary gain becomes the dominant factor in the lives of men, the quality of society undergoes a subtle disintegration. That such a society should be the scene of a perpetual conflict of interests, sometimes concealed, sometimes overt, between the economic groups composing them, is not surprising. Men can co-operate only in so far as they are united by allegiance to a common purpose which is recognized as superior to their sectional interests. As long as industry is organized, primarily, not for the service of the community but with the object of producing a purely financial result for some of its members, it cannot be recognized as properly fulfiling its social purpose.

2. Inequalities

The second feature of the economic system which challenges the conscience of Christians is the existence of disparities of economic circumstances on a scale which differs from country to country, but in some is shocking, in all considerable. Not only is the product of industry distributed with an inequality so extreme (though the extent of this inequality also varies considerably from country to country) that a small minority of the population are in receipt of incomes exceeding in the aggregate those of many times their number, but—even more seriously—the latter are condemned throughout their lives to environmental evils which the former escape, and are deprived of the opportunities of fully developing their powers, which are accessible, as a matter of course, to their more fortunate fellows. It is no part of the teaching of Christianity that all men are equally endowed by nature, or that identical provision should be made for all, irrespective of difference of capacity and need. What it does assert is that all men are children of one Father, and that, compared with that primary and overwhelming fact, the differences between the races, nationalities, and classes of men, though important on their own plane, are external and trivial. Any social arrangement which outrages the dignity of man, by treating some men as ends and others as means, any institution which obscures the common humanity of men by emphasizing the external accidents of birth, or wealth, or social position, is *ipso facto* anti-Christian.

There is one aspect of the subject which deserves special emphasis. Whatever their differences on other subjects, Christians cannot be in doubt as to the primary duty of ensuring that the conditions required for full personal development are enjoyed by the whole of the rising generation. In some countries that obligation receives fuller recognition than in others, but of few, if any, can it be said that equal opportunities of physical and mental growth are available for all. It is still the case, even in some of the wealthy nations of Western Europe, that large numbers of children undergo grave injury to their health before they reach the age of school attendance, though the methods by which such injury can be prevented are well known; that the educational provision made for them when at school is often, owing to reluctance to spend the sums required, gravely defective in quality; that many of them are plunged prematurely into full-time work in industry, where too often they are employed under conditions injurious both to their characters and to their physical well-being; and that diversities of educational provision correspond to differences of income among parents rather than of capacity among children. It often happens that these disadvantages are greatly increased where economic opportunities are denied on racial grounds. This racial discrimination is seen in various forms: a double standard of wages; the inability of members of certain races, whatever their competence may be, to rise above a certain level of responsibility in their respective callings; their exclusion in some circumstances from labour unions; and the refusal to admit members of some racial groups to occupations reserved for members of the dominant race.

3. Irresponsible Possession of Economic Power

A third feature of the existing situation which is repugnant to the Christian conscience consists in the power wielded by a few individuals or groups who are not responsible to any organ of society. This gives the economic order in many countries some resemblance to a tyranny in the classical sense of that term, where rulers are not accountable for their actions to any superior authority representing the community over whom power is exercised. At the top of this hierarchy are the leaders of the world of finance, whose decisions raise and lower the economic temperature. Below them are the controllers of certain great key industries, the conduct and policy of which vitally effect the lives of millions of human beings. Below them again are a mass of economic undertakings, large and small, the masters of which exercise power over the few hundred, or few thousand, persons dependent on each of them. The power which these wield is qualified at many points by trade unionism and by law. On the whole, however, the action both of trade unionism and of the State has been confined hitherto to establishing and maintaining certain minimum standards. Almost the whole field of economic strategy, which in the long run determines what standards can be maintained, escapes their control.

Economic, like political, autocracy is attended doubtless by certain advantages. However, it is liable to produce both in individuals and in society a character and outlook on life which it is difficult to reconcile with any relationship that can be described as Christian. It tends to create in those who wield authority, and in the agents through whom they exercise it, a dictatorial temper, which springs not from any defect of charcter peculiar to them, but from the influence upon them of the position which they occupy. The effect of excessive economic power on those over whom it is exercised is equally serious. Often it makes them servile; fear of losing their jobs, and a vague belief that, in the end, the richer members of society always hold the whip-hand, tends to destroy their spiritual virility. Often, again, it makes them bitter and cynical; they feel that force, not justice, rules their world, and are tempted to dismiss, as insincere cant, words which imply a different view.

4. The Frustration of the Sense of Christian Vocation

A profound conflict has arisen between the demand (on the one hand) that the Christian should be doing the will of God in his daily work, and (on the other) the actual kinds of work which Christians find themselves forced to do within the economic order. With regard to the worker and employee, there is the fact that most of them are *directly* conscious of working for the profit of the employer (and for the sake of their wages) and only *indirectly* conscious of working for any public good; while this fact may in some cases be only part of the mechanism by which the work is done for the public good, the difficulty in part remains. Again, there is the fact that at present many workers must produce things which are useless or shoddy or destructive. Finally, one other form of work which

seems clearly to be in conflict with the Christian's vocation is salesmanship of a kind which involves deception—the deception which may be no more than insinuation and exaggeration, but which is a serious threat to the integrity of the worker.

But even more serious is the constant threat of unemployment. This produces a feeling of extreme insecurity in the minds of masses of the people. Unemployment, especially when prolonged, tends to create in the mind of the unemployed person a sense of uselessness, or even of being a nuisance, and to empty his life of any meaning. This situation cannot be met by measures of unemployment assistance, because it is the lack of significant activity which tends to destroy his human self-respect.

PART IV. CHRISTIAN DECISIONS IN RESPONSE TO THIS CHALLENGE

It has been pointed out above (in Part I) that the message of the Gospel is not addressed, as has sometimes been suggested, to the individual alone. Christianity is emphatically a social religion. Its teaching is directed to men, not as units isolated from their fellows, but as members of groups and communities. It insists that the only life in which human beings can find peace and happiness is that of service and self-sacrifice. It asserts that the relations of men to each other are part of their relation to God. It emphasizes that, if the former are not what the Christian conscience would approve, then the latter necessarily share their corruption. "If a man love not his brother whom he hath seen, how shall he love God whom he hath not seen?"

These relations are, of course, of many different kinds. But, in the case of the majority of men, they are determined more directly and more continuously by the action of economic interests than by any other single force. It is clearly the duty of Christians, therefore, to test by the canons of their Faith not merely their individual conduct and the quality of their private lives, but also the institutional framework of organized society. In so far as they are true to their creed, they cannot either take the economic system for granted, or dismiss it as irrelevant to the life of the spirit. They are bound to require it to present its moral credentials; to examine those credentials in the light of Christian doctrine as to the nature of God and man; and, in so far as it fails to satisfy that criterion, to use every effort to amend or to supersede it. If detachment is incumbent on Christians in reaching their conclusions, courage in stating and energy in acting on them are no less among their duties.

Whatever agreements may be reached by Christians concerning their responsibility for seeking to eradicate those features of the economic order which challenge the Christian conscience, it is an historic fact, which we can hardly expect to obviate in the future, that men who belong to the Christian Church and who are united by common religious convictions differ in the conception and in the execution of their political obligations.

The profoundest difference at the present time in many countries seems to be between those who believe that the challenges to the Christian faith outlined in the previous section can be met within the framework of a system of private enterprise, and those who demand the supplanting of that system by one primarily based upon the social ownership of the means of production. But even within these two general divisions of opinion other differences of great importance, about the precise means of improving the present system, or about the *tempo* and the degree of reconstruction needed, have revealed themselves in the work of this Conference. These differences are an accurate reflection, we believe, of similar differences in the whole Church.

These differences are of course partly differences of judgment which honest minds face in any realm of human decision. On the one hand it must be recognized that differences in political opinion are partly derived from the varying circumstances—economic, geographic, and historical—which help to condition human judgments. Human judgments upon issues in which our own lives are involved are naturally less impartial than those which concern purely objective problems. The very recognition of this fact within the Church might well mitigate the extremism to which each group is tempted. If those who are comparatively secure recognize the temptation to complacency which this security implies, the temper of the insecure may speak to their conscience and not merely incite their temper. On the other hand the proponents of a new social system are always tempted to identify every existing evil with the particular social organization in which it expresses itself. They find it difficult to disassociate perennial human sinfulness from particular historic forms of it. They are furthermore tempted to a hatred towards the representatives of a given social order which is not justified by the facts, since evils in it are only partly willed and partly the inevitable consequence of a given social situation which good men may mitigate but not overcome. Thus there are at least two attitudes to political and economic problems which seem to be definitely incompatible with membership of the Christian Church: the complacent defence of exclusive privilege on the one hand and unteachable and self-righteous fanaticism on the other.

Among the various proposals for reform or reconstruction of the economic system several deserve special mention here. Within terms of the present system, the various proposals may be generally reduced to two: (*a*) Those which look towards exerting a greater degree of social and political control upon, and demanding a greater degree of social responsibility from, the holders of great economic power; (*b*) Those which seek to equalize the inequalities of economic society by heavy taxation on the one hand and by social legislation on the other hand. Every modern industrial nation has adopted these two social policies to a greater or less degree. A third policy of seeking to prevent the centralization of power by Government destruction of monopoly and by Government support of small farmers, small traders, etc., is less popular in all industrial nations than

it was some decades ago. All these policies point to a recognition that the chief dangers of a system of private enterprise are irresponsible power and inequality.

Among those who believe in the transformation or reconstruction of a system of private enterprise to one of social ownership there are wide varieties of conviction on the means and *tempo* of this process of reconstruction. There is a general hope that this can be done by gradual process and through the resources of democratic political forms. Nevertheless some feel that, however desirable it may be to make all social decisions through the democratic process, there is no way of guaranteeing the acquiescence of minorities, upon which the democratic process depends. They point out that in moments of great social crisis every society must deal with the possibility that minorities, whether Conservative or Radical, may defy rather than submit to the will of the majority. But recent Russian history offers such telling examples of the danger of irresponsible political power supplanting irresponsible economic power, if the democratic control of power is destroyed, that the determination of the nations which still possess democratic forms to preserve and maintain them has been greatly reinforced.

There remain among proponents of social ownership a wide variety of opinion on the degree of socialization of property required by a technical civilization. Most generally it is the basic industries and the natural resources for which such socialization is demanded. The socialization of land, of retail trade, and of small industry finds fewer proponents, though the first is an issue wherever feudal forms of land ownership and tenantry are still in existence.

There are certain social proposals which fall between the policy of maintaining the system of private property and that of socializing it. Chief among these are the proposals for the socialization of money and credit, and for the extension of the principle of co-operation through voluntary co-operative enterprises. Both of these proposals have secured particularly strong support among Christian people on the ground that on the one hand they offer the opportunity of eliminating the evils of the present system in a more thoroughgoing fashion, and that on the other hand they involve less social conflict and tension. The question which the first proposal must answer is whether money and credit are more organically related to property than it assumes. The second proposal must answer the question whether co-operatives, which have thus far developed only in the realm of consumers' goods, can affect in any way the problems of heavy industry.

All of these proposals involve technical issues upon which technical evidence varies, and it is therefore impossible to claim a moral obligation in support of any of them. There is always the possibility that new institutions will reintroduce ancient evils in a new form, or substitute new evils for those which have been abolished. Such a question involves technical problems on which Christians as Christians are not competent to pronounce. It would be well however for Christians to beware lest the weight

which is accorded to technical evidence, in the support or rejection of any one proposal, be determined by the particular bias of the social group to which they belong.

The Christian Church is a fellowship in Christ which transcends differences of judgment and divergences of action in relation to the concrete economic situation. Further, if only Christians are brought to repentance in the light of the Christian message, they can never maintain that attitude of fanatical hatred toward members of other groups which is now so common in the world. They and their opponents are both sinners in the presence of God, and the recognition of this fact, in social as well as in personal terms, would itself be a great constructive contribution towards moderating the bitterness of the struggle between social groups.

PART V. CHRISTIAN TEACHING IN RELATION TO THE ECONOMIC ORDER

We have stated in Part III of this report the special points at which there is a conflict between the present economic order and the Christian understanding of life. In Part IV we have pointed out the kind of social decisions which have to be made by all Christians as citizens.

But it is not enough to say that these problems are chiefly the responsibility of Christian individuals or Christian lay groups and leave the matter there. The further question must be raised, What guidance can those who must make these decisions concerning the economic order receive from their Christian faith? That question places great responsibility upon those in the Church who have the task of interpreting the meaning of Christian faith. In this work of interpretation the clergy should have a specially important contribution to make, but that contribution must be made with understanding of the experience of laymen. It is important that whenever this Christian guidance is crystallized in the reports and pronouncements of official Church bodies, or of such a conference as the Oxford Conference, laymen should share with the clergy this task of formulation. These laymen should come from various economic groups. This section of the report will be an attempt to formulate the kind of guidance which it is now possible to receive from Christian faith for economic life. We are here dealing directly with what the teaching of the Church as a Church should be concerning the economic order.

We must begin by recognizing that there are some factors in economic life which are more clearly within the province of the Church, and concerning which more light can be gained from the Christian message than others, and that there are many matters of judgment in particular situations which involve chiefly expert knowledge.

Recognizing, then, the importance of attempting to mark out as clearly as possible the precise areas within which the Christian can expect to receive light from the Christian faith, and within which the teaching of the Church as Church in regard to economic life should be carried on, we proceed to

suggest three such areas. In presenting these areas we are suggesting what might be the framework of the Christian message in relation to the economic order in the next decade.

(A) *Christian teaching should deal with ends, in the sense of long-range goals, standards, and principles in the light of which every concrete situation and every proposal for improving it must be tested.* It is in the light of such ends and principles that the four characteristics of the existing economic order discussed in section three stand out as challenges to the Christian Church. There are differences in theory concerning the way in which these ends are related to the Christian faith. Some would be very careful not to call these ends Christian and yet they would recognize that they are ends which *Christians* should seek in obedience to God.

We suggest five such ends or standards, by way of example, as applicable to the testing of any economic situation.

(1) Right fellowship between man and man being a condition of man's fellowship with God, every economic arrangement which frustrates or restricts it must be modified—and in particular such ordering of economic life as tends to divide the community into classes based upon differences of wealth and to occasion a sense of injustice among the poorer members of society. To every member of the community there must be made open a worthy means of livelihood. The possibilities of amassing private accumulations of wealth should be so limited that the scale of social values is not perverted by the fear and the envy, the insolence and the servility, which tend to accompany extreme inequality.

(2) Regardless of race or class every child and youth must have opportunities of education suitable for the full development of his particular capacities, and must be free from those adventitious handicaps in the matter of health and environment which our society loads upon large numbers of the children of the less privileged classes. In this connection, the protection of the family as a social unit should be an urgent concern of the community.

(3) Persons disabled from economic activity, whether by sickness, infirmity, or age, should not be economically penalized on account of their disability, but on the contrary should be the object of particular care. Here again the safeguarding of the family is involved.

(4) Labour has intrinsic worth and dignity, as being designed by God for man's welfare. The duty and the right of men to work should therefore alike be emphasized. In the industrial process labour should never be considered as a mere commodity. In their daily work men should be able to recognize and fulfil a Christian vocation. The working man, whether in field or factory, is entitled to a living wage, wholesome surroundings, and a recognized voice in the decisions which affect his welfare as a worker.

(5) The resources of the earth, such as the soil and mineral wealth, should be recognized as gifts of God to the whole human race, and used

with due and balanced consideration for the needs of the present and future generations.

The implications of even one of these standards, seriously taken, will involve drastic changes in economic life. Each one of them must be made more definite in terms of the problems which face particular communities.

Closely connected with the foregoing paragraphs is the whole question of property—so closely indeed that any action on the part of the community which affects property rights will also affect the application of the standards mentioned. This is a sphere in which Christian teaching on ends and principles in relation to economic life could have immediate results if it were translated into actual economic decisions. Christian thought has already supplied a background which is of great importance, but it has not been brought into effective relationship with the development of the institutions of property under modern economic conditions. This subject should be given close attention by any agencies for further study which may be established in the future. Meanwhile we suggest a few of the directions along which Christian thought should move.

(1) It should be reaffirmed without qualification that all human property rights are relative and contingent only in virtue of the dependence of man upon God as the giver of all wealth and the creator of man's capacities to develop the resources of nature. This fundamental Christian conviction must express itself both in the idea of stewardship or trusteeship and in the willingness of the Christian to examine accumulations of property in the light of their social consequences.

(2) The existing system of property rights and the existing distribution of property must be criticized in the light of the largely non-moral processes by which they have been developed, and criticism must take account of the fact that every argument in defense of property rights which is valid for Christian thinking is also an argument for the widest possible distribution of these rights.

(3) It should further be affirmed that individual property rights must never be maintained or exercised without regard to their social consequences or without regard to the contribution which the community makes in the production of all wealth.

(4) It is very important to make clear distinction between various forms of property. The property which consists in personal possessions for use, such as the home, has behind it a clearer moral justification than property in the means of production and in land which gives the owners power over other persons. All property which represents social power stands in special need of moral scrutiny, since power to determine the lives of others is the crucial point in any scheme of justice. The question must always be asked whether this is the kind of power which can be brought under adequate social control or whether it is of the type which by its very nature escapes and evades social control. Industrial property in particular encourages the concentration of power; for it gives the owner control over both the place and the instruments of labour and thus leaves

the worker powerless, so far as property relations are concerned, allowing him only the organized strength of his union and his political franchise to set against the power of ownership. Property in land on a large scale may represent a similar power over those who are forced to rent it for a livelihood. There are consequently forms of feudal landownership in Europe, in some states of America, and in the Orient, which are frequent sources of social injustice. On the other hand, property in land which does not extend beyond the capacity of one family to cultivate—the small freehold which determines a large part of the agriculture of the Western world—belongs to a unique category. The small freeholder may find it increasingly difficult to compete against mechanized large-scale production and to make a living without being overdriven. But there is a special justification for this type of property, since it gives freedom to perform a social function without the interference of capricious power and without the exercise of power over others. Furthermore there is a more organic relation between owner and property in agricultural land than in any type of industrial ownership. Small-scale property in industry and in retail trade possesses some of these same characteristics in a lesser degree. Yet there is always the danger that small-scale productive property, whether in land, industry, or trade, may tempt the owner, in his competition with more powerful productive units, to exploit his own family and the other workers employed, especially since in any given case the latter may be too few to organize effectively.

(B) *The message of Christianity should throw a searchlight on the actual facts of the existing situation and in particular reveal the human consequences of present forms of economic behaviour.* It is this which saves statements of principles from being platitudes. The kind of critical analysis which is set forth in Section III must be a part of the message of the Church. Here it is important not to impute motives or to denounce individuals (except where special circumstances call for such denunciation), but to present facts in such a way that they speak for themselves to the individual conscience. What in isolation seems to be purely destructive criticism is a necessary part of the total process by which constructive change is brought about.

The most obvious human consequences of existing economic behaviour are quite as much, if not more, within the province of the Church as they are within the province of the expert in the social sciences. The clergyman in the course of pastoral work has opportunities, if he is capable of using them, of knowing what the present economic situation does to the character, the *morale,* the true welfare of men, women, and children, and to family life. The expert may have to supply statistics, but the meaning of the statistics can be known only to those who see the particular results of an economic situation in the lives of persons. As it has been said, "Love implies the ability to read statistics with compassion." Christian insight ought to enable men and women to see more deeply into the effects of an economic situation. Where there are secular agencies which have the

facts, the task of the Church is to aid in making those facts available to its members and especially to those who have a teaching function within the Church. But there are occasions on which some agency of the Church may have the task of securing the facts. This can be most helpful in controversial situations in which the Church has a position of relative independence of the parties to the controversy.

It is not enough to catalogue particular cases of poverty and exploitation or to call attention to specific cases of selfish and irresponsible conduct on the part of those in power. It is the business of the Church to point out where the economic institutions of our time are in themselves infected with evil. They place narrow limits on the choices of the best men who work within them. The individual employer, for example, is often greatly handicapped in paying a living wage if he must compete with less scrupulous employers. There are multitudes of high-minded Christians who, as employers, business men, and trade unionists, do a great deal to develop happy relationships between employers and employees and to preserve the highest standards of personal integrity within their spheres of influence. Many of the most praiseworthy human motives—constructive service to mankind, the creation of cultural and material values, the desire to achieve conditions essential to the development of human personality — inspire their conduct. No criticisms of the present consequences of economic behaviour in general should obscure the positive contribution of such men. On the other hand, the presence of such conscientious Christians in places of responsibility should not create the expectation that, without changes in institutions and legal relationships, they will be able to overcome the evils set forth in Part III.

(C) *This searchlight of the Christian message can also make clear the obstacles to economic justice in the human heart, and especially those that are present in the hearts of people within the Church.* It is not enough that individual Christians should become good in their intentions or become changed in their conscious motives. What is needed is the kind of self-knowledge which will help Christians to understand how far their attitudes are moulded by the position which they hold in the economic order. Self-knowledge is no less important than knowledge of external conditions, and more important than the knowledge of the sins of others.

Christians must come to understand how far they really do seek, in spite of all pretensions to the contrary, a world in which they and their group are on top, how far their opinions on economic issues are controlled by the interests of the group or class to which they belong, how far they are deceived by false slogans and rationalizations, how far they are callous to "evil at a distance" or evil experienced by another national or class group than their own—evil to which they may consent, for which they may vote, or by which they may profit. Here again, the important activity is not denunciation but the helping of people to have that self-knowledge which comes from the perspective of the Christian emphasis upon sin, so that they will condemn themselves.

The various parts of the Church must at this point be guided in the relative emphasis they place on different forms of self-deception by the character of their constituencies. Those parts of the Church which contain chiefly the comfortable middle classes should create an atmosphere in which it is most likely that the peculiarly middle-class illusions will be punctured. There is, for example, in these classes a tendency to take the present property system for granted and to regard as unjust changes which alter the present distribution of property or the present rights of owners. The kind of Christian teaching about property which is outlined above is at this stage of special importance for these classes.

These classes must also come to see how one-sided those conceptions of Christianity are which assume that, because Christianity is a spiritual religion, economic conditions do not greatly matter, or that it is enough to leave it to the grace of God to save souls in all varieties of external circumstances. Justice may at this stage be embodied in the distribution of bread, but for that reason the quest for justice is not less spiritual. Moreover, it is unseemly for people to be complacent in the face of existing obstacles to the personal development of others, obstacles which they have not themselves experienced. To be complacent in this way because of a religious belief concerning the soul or God is to turn religion into an opiate for the conscience.

Also it is important in some countries that Christians in the comfortable middle classes be helped to realize that they are controlled by class interests quite as much as the workers or farmers, and that in some countries, where organizations of workers and farmers are not far advanced, they are themselves even more controlled by class interests than those other groups. The assumption that the interests of the middle classes are identical with the interests of the community is an illusion which unconsciously blinds many of the most sincere Christians and makes them unfair and self-righteous in their attitude towards those classes which at present are the chief sufferers from the economic order.

At the proper time and in the proper place the teaching of the Church should also create an atmosphere in which the illusions of the working classes and other groups can readily be punctured. It is an illusion, for example, to suppose that the interests of the industrial workers are identical with those of the community.

What is important is that each group, in the most effective ways possible, should be brought under the criticism which is implicit in Christian faith. In relationships between classes, we tend at present to see only the mote in our brother's eye. Christians have a special obligation, as they ought to have a special gift for this purpose, to try to interpret separate groups in society to one another. Barriers have to be broken through before they can be broken down. Self-sacrifice and compassion are good, but they are not, for example, what the poor to-day want of the well-to do. Without the understanding mind which is able to think and feel the position of the other man, suspicion and distrust cannot be broken down. This power of

delicate discernment and sensibility is rare in the world, because it is, in truth, a God-given grace, and as such should be the peculiar contribution of the Church to the making of true community.

Self-knowledge is a necessary condition for Christian repentance. The Church should be able to bring about this condition of repentance because it has a conception of human nature at the heart of its Gospel which should make men naturally suspicious of their own motives, and which should thus lead them to put a strong burden of proof on themselves when their decisions coincide with their own economic advantages. In some cases it can also be said that the Church (and this would mean especially the clergy) has some degree of detachment from the immediate pressure of the interests of economic groups and should be able to see the world from the point of view of more than one group. That this is true at present to only a small degree is itself one of the most tragic and sinful factors in the life of the Church.

In the next decade those who are responsible for guiding the life of the Church must seek, by means of these and other forms of teaching, to bring under moral control the attitude of their members in economic relationships—just as they have always sought to bring under moral control the attitude of their members in direct personal relationships. This task will involve far more than preaching. It must become an integral part of the whole life and atmosphere of the Church. The Church as a worshipping community must relate its acts of repentance and dedication to the economic order in which its members live. Emphasis must here be placed upon the importance of teaching children and young people before the crusts formed by class and convention close their minds. The training of the clergy must include preparation for this kind of teaching.

In concluding this part of the report we wish to emphasize that the work of teaching to which we have drawn attention above cannot be performed without the co-operation of the laity. Groups of men and women who are responsible for the conduct of industry and the functioning of the economic order must be helped to discover for themselves how the principles which we have tried to enunciate can be worked out in the spheres of life which are in some measure under their control. This opens up a large field for experiment, and calls for fresh developments in many directions, as well as for new types of ministry.

PART VI. IMMEDIATE CHRISTIAN ACTION

A. Action by the Churches

1. Reform of their own Institutional Life

It is within the power of the Churches to set their own houses in order where this requires to be done. As an economic and social organization a Church, be it local, national or ecumenical, cannot escape in sharing in some measure the features of the secular society in which it is rooted,

but in so far as its members are sensitive to the Spirit of Christ they will be critically aware of that relationship. A Church which is prophetic and apostolic, as the Christian fellowship is meant to be, will live under a divine compulsion to realize the perfection of God, as completely as human imperfection will allow, in every concrete situation of its life—and having done all, its members will know themselves to be "unprofitable servants." A Church, moreover, is not likely to convince men in an economic-minded age that it is a supernatural society if it allows its economic and social organization to remain sub-worldly. In regard to the sources of income, methods of raising money, and administration of property, as well as in the terms on which it employs men and women and their tenure of office, Churches ought to be scrupulous to avoid the evils that Christians deplore in secular society.

Moreover, the economic organization of the Church ought to help and not to hinder the comity in Christ which should be the feature of its common life. There should, therefore, be a reasonable uniformity in the payment of those who hold the same spiritual office, and they ought to be paid according to the real needs of themselves and their families, and sufficiently to allow them to give themselves without too great anxiety concerning daily bread to their spiritual service. It is not tolerable that those who minister to the rich should be comparatively well-off and those who minister to the poor should be poor for that reason alone. It is not right that those who have greater responsibility in the Church or greater gifts of utterance than their brethren should for that reason alone have much larger incomes. It does not express Christian solidarity that churches in poor and depressing districts should be handicapped by an inefficient and unlovely plant, which would not be tolerated in the assemblies of the rich. So long as the institution has those defects in its organization it will corrupt most subtly the vocational sense of its ministry, and prejudice its witness in the world. On the other hand, if its members were more continuously critical of its economic structure, and were quick to reform evils in it, such concrete action would release spiritual power.

2. Development of New Machinery for Research and Action

Hitherto the Churches have only been partially informed and sporadically articulate on the subjects dealt with in this report. Although Churches as such have no special competence in the technical sphere, yet it is in and through the technical sphere that spiritual principles have to find expression. In the words of Baron von Hügel, "The supernatural is known in and through the natural."

Before truthful judgment can be made or principles successfully applied in concrete situations, the relevant facts—material and personal—require to be studied and mastered. To this end the churches ought—where they are not already equipped for the purpose—to have at their service, regionally as well as ecumenically, organs both for study and research, as well as for witness and action in appropriate circumstances. Only so far as

these are first-rate in competence and equipment are they likely to command attention within and without the Churches.

In the past, pronouncements sometimes and preachings often have failed to carry weight because the speakers assumed a technical knowledge which they did not have. We would urge, therefore, that in the forming of Christian opinion there should be more co-operation between clergy and ministers, on the one hand, and those of the laity, on the other, who are engaged in industry commerce, and public administration.

3. Integration of Work and Worship

One of the tasks laid upon the Church, which is not easy to carry out in the existing state of things, is to re-establish in the experience of men and women a unity of work and worship. While their irrelevance one to another at the present time is partly because much work is pagan and unworshipful, it is also due to the fact that the daily business of the modern world, and the problems and issues dealt with in this report, are not sufficiently woven into the Liturgy and worship of the Church. Unless men are required to ask forgiveness, to make petitions and to give thanks for the things with which they are chiefly concerned day by day, public worship will begin to seem secondary. There should be no discontinuity between the Sanctuary and the life and work in office, factory, or home, for the God we worship cares for the whole of men's life, and not only for that part of it which is specifically religious.

B. Action by Christians

1. Action within the existing Economic Order

Whatever their reaction to the existing situation, Christians are under constraint to carry their faith and loyalty into concrete situations, the daily business and the personal relationships of their life. In the integrity and faithfulness which they bring to "the daily round and common task" they may be instruments, in some measure, of the creative work and the justice and mercy of God. Outside the fields of business, industry, and the professions there are, moreover, varied opportunities of Christian service. The increasing amount of law and legislation which controls industrial activity and social life in the modern state depends for its administration and good results upon the actions of associations of employers, trade unions, government officials and social workers, both paid and voluntary. The development of national and local government and of the co-operative movements provide large fields for social action and fellowship which the Christian should be anxious to enter.

2. Group Experiments

Because some things cannot be changed without State action or international adjustment, the effective power of "two or three" men of conviction, who make themselves into a Christian "cell" must not be under-

estimated. In fact, the world over, there are such groups, who in the spirit of him who walked the second mile are proving what can be done to bridge unbridgeable gulfs and to bring back into society those who have felt themselves to be outcasts and unwanted.

3. Changing the Economic Order

Finally, in accordance with the argument developed above (in Part IV), Christians have a particular responsibility to make whatever contribution they can towards the transformation, and if necessary the thorough reconstruction, of the present economic and political system, through their membership of political parties, trade unions, employers' organizations, and other groups. In this part of their Christian duty the same characteristics are called for, though in a different form, as those which Christians are called on to show in all their other activities: readiness to make sacrifices, to take effective action, to forgive those that trespass against them, and to love those that seem to be their enemies.

* * *

Christianity sincerely professed brings to those who are striving for a better order of society the serene confidence that to them that love God all things work together for good. This world is God's world. His Spirit is alive to-day as yesterday. Here in His own good time His Kingdom will come. If men will put themselves unreservedly and humbly at the service of God He is able to overrule their stupidity and sin, and to use them to set forward His Purpose for mankind, which is a society better than their deserving as it is beyond their desires.

STUDY ONE

THE RELATION OF CHRISTIANITY TO ECONOMIC LIFE

Read Parts 1 and V of the Report and consider in the light of the discussion therein and of your other reading the following questions:

In what ways does our Christian faith make it necessary to deal with the problems of economic life?

Is the duty to love our neighbors based on their own intrinsic worth or on their relation to God, or on both?

What do you understand by the Kingdom of God? What does the Report mean by saying both that it "has come" and that it "is coming?"

Are love and justice essentially different? Must the Christian ever follow a course which is in violation of love in order to do justice?

The Report enumerates typical mistakes of conservatives and radicals in regard to the relation between the Christian goal and the particular structures of society (page 12). Do you agree?

To what extent is acquisitiveness, as shown in the "profit motive" consistent with the Christian principle of love? What other human motives can be appealed to in economic relations?

Do you think that the growth of acquisitiveness can be checked by changing individuals one by one, or is some change in the mechanisms of economic life necessary? What is your opinion of the position taken in the last paragraph on page 11?

Consider the five criteria for a Christian judgment of the economic order on page 24. Is there anything there that you would take issue with?

STUDY TWO

SOME ETHICAL ISSUES RAISED BY THE ECONOMIC SYSTEM

Read Parts III and IV of the Report. Make notes of current happenings in your community and in the nation that throw light on the matter discussed. Then try to formulate answers to these questions:

It was believed in the nineteenth century (and some still believe) that if all men *intelligently* sought their own interests the common good would be best served. This is the *laissez-faire idea.* To what extent is this belief justified?

What positive contributions to human progress has capitalism made? What factors seem now to limit economic development under capitalism? Are they inherent in the system or incidental to it?

What do you believe to be the causes of the rise of communism? Is it correct to regard communism as anti-religious? Wholly, or only in part?

The Report offers four criticisms of the present economic order. (See pages 17-20). Are they applicable to economic life in America? Would you add anything to these criticisms? Are the faults pointed out in any way related to each other?

Do we have "classes" in America? You might consider, when answering, the following facts concerning the national income in 1929 assembled by the Brookings Institution:

Nearly 6 million families, or more than 21 per cent of the total, had incomes less than $1000.

About 12 million families, or more than 42 per cent, had incomes less than $1500.

Sixteen million families, or about 60 per cent of the total, had incomes less than $2000.

Nearly 20 million families, or 71 per cent, had incomes less than $2500.

Only a little more than 2 million families, or 8 per cent, had incomes in excess of $5000.

About 600,000 families, or 2.3 per cent, had incomes in excess of $10,000.

What forms of economic discrimination on racial grounds are practiced in this country? Who, or what, is to blame?

What are the effects in your community of continued unemployment? Consider especially young people recently out of school and people who have passed middle life.

What is the value of labor unions? Are there dangers in unionism? When they use objectionable tactics how do you apportion the blame as between labor, employers, and the "public"?

STUDY THREE

THE SEARCH FOR CHRISTIAN SOLUTIONS

Think over Part V again—then read Part VI. Examine in the light of the criteria there set up the various proposals for economic betterment that have been offered in recent months. Then consider these questions:

Why do Christian people who agree on the evils in economic life differ so much as to programs of betterment? Are these differences due to (a) contrasting religious beliefs? (b) differences in the individual's economic interests and status? (c) differences of political philosophy? (d) differences in knowledge of technical matters?

The Report says that Christianity cannot be identified with any one social program. Does this mean that specific programs do not have a definite claim on Christians as such? Can you name some programs that you think all Christians should support?

In the light of the American situation how do you evaluate from the Christian point of view the following proposals or programs:

a. higher income taxes and inheritance taxes?
b. more government regulation of monopolistic enterprises?
c. further development of social insurance?
d. encouraging the growth of the labor movement?
e. the extension of government ownership?
f. the Cooperative movement?
g. further extension of the New Deal?
h. a return to more conservative policies?
i. any other movements, either "left" or "right"?

In the light of what experts tell us about the possibility of a national "economy of abundance" is the abolition of poverty a Christian duty?

What are the most effective ways, in your opinion, by which Christian people can prevent the growth of anti-religious radical movements?

What do you think of the statement at the end of the Report that in God's "own good time His Kingdom will come"? What implications has this for human effort?

STUDY FOUR

TASKS FOR THE CHURCH IN ITS OWN HOUSEHOLD

Read again the "Salient Features." Then read the questions and review the Report for passages that bear especially upon them. Now, as a responsible layman, what do you say to the following questions?

In what areas does the Church need to watch its own economic behavior? Does it ever exploit its own labor? Consider in this connection not only ministers but also janitors, employees in church office buildings and printing establishments, and employees in church-controlled schools and hospitals.

Do you know whether your church or denomination when investing its endowment funds scrutinizes the policies of the concerns in which it invests? Should it do so?

Is it fair that the salaries of ministers who carry equal burdens of work should be so unequal, depending on the wealth of the churches and the incomes of their members? Or should ministers, like missionaries, be paid in accord with the needs of their families? Do you know what ministers themselves think about this?

Are ministers as free as they should be to preach on economic questions? And are laymen as active as they should be in aiding the ministers to put Christian ideals into working form? How can ministers and laymen be brought into closer cooperation in these matters?

Do you see any connection between the subjects discussed in this course and the worship services that you attend on Sundays? Might the various parts of these services—hymns, prayers, anthems, liturgy, and sermons—express better than they do the Christian concern for economic relations?

What facilities does your denomination have for gaining information about economic and social issues for the benefit of ministers and laymen? Are you familiar with the research reports of the Federal Council of Churches? Might your local church do something in this connection?

Is your church a fellowship that truly cuts across economic and social cleavages? How can it be made to "be the Church" more truly in its fellowship?

SUGGESTED READING

on

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OXFORD CONFERENCE SERIES ON CHURCH, COMMUNITY, AND STATE

(Nos. II - VII will be published during 1938.)

I. The Church and Its Function in Society.

By Dr. W. A. Visser 't Hooft and Dr. J. H. Oldham.

"Challenging and arresting, and will shake us all out of our complacency if we can but see in it a call of God . . . I therefore urge everyone to secure and to read this volume." 238 pages. $2.00.

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II. The Christian Understanding of Man.

By Prof. T. E. Jessop, Prof. R. E. Calhoun, Prof. N. N. Alexeiev, Prof. Emil Brunner, Pastor Pierre Maury, the Rev. Austin Farrer, Prof. W. M. Horton.

III. The Kingdom of God and History.

By Prof. C. H. Dodd, Dr. Edwyn Bevan, Dr. Christopher Dawson, Prof. Eugene Lyman, Prof. Paul Tillich, Prof. H. Wendland, Prof. H. G. Wood.

IV. The Christian Faith and the Common Life.

By Dr. M. Dibelius, Prof. John Bennett, The Archbishop of York, Prof. Reinhold Niebuhr, the Rev. H. H. Farmer, Dr. W. Wiesner.

V. Church and Community.

By Prof. E. E. Aubrey, Prof. E. Barker, M. Björkquist, Dr. H. Lilje, Prof. S. Zankov, Dr. H. Paul Douglass, Prof. K. S. Latourette. M. Boegner.

VI. Church, Community and State in relation to Education.

By Prof. F. Clarke, Paul Monro, Prof. W. Zenkovsky, C. E. Morris, J. W. D. Smith, Prof. P. H. Kohnstamm.

VII. The Universal Church and the World of Nations.

By the Marquess of Lothian, Prof. Sir Alfred Zimmern, Dr. O. von der Gablentz, John Foster Dulles, Pastor W. Menn, the Rev. V. A. Demant, Dr. Otto Piper, Canon C. E. Raven.

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